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MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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July 18, 1973

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INSTRUCTIONS APPLY*"Noted by HK"*

MEMORANDUM FOR: HENRY A. KISSINGER
FROM: L. S. *[Signature]* EAGLEBURGER
SUBJECT: National Intelligence Estimate (NIE)
on China's Strategic Attack Programs

The most recent NIE on China's strategic capabilities reveals nothing of great surprise. The findings can be summarized as follows:

Present Capabilities

- (a) 15-30 semi-mobile, soft-site launchers for 600 nm missiles
- (b) 25-40 fixed, soft-site launchers for 1400 nm missiles (fusion warheads)
- (c) 60 Badger bombers, deployed at four airfields; action radius - 1650 nm; not all currently nuclear armed

Deployment Pattern

Peripheral distribution of present missile and bomber forces, designed to ensure coverage of U.S. Far East bases, India, and the USSR east of the Urals.

Reasonably Certain Future Deployment

Extended regional coverage through deployment, as early as 1974, of 2700-3500 nm missiles with 3 MT warheads. The upper end of this range would encompass Moscow.

CONUS-Capable Development Programs

- (a) China's ICBM test program has been marred by delay and failure. Worst case (for U.S.): first Chinese ICBM by 1976; 40 ICBMs by 1978. However, given continuation of the apparent present emphasis on improving their regional capabilities at the expense of ICBM development, the rate of progress in ICBM technology seems likely to result in the deployment of only 15 ICBMs by 1978.

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2

- (b) SSBN: The first SSBN is possibly now under construction; no flight-test of a submarine-compatible missile has been detected. A 1977 date for first operational Chinese SSBN is optimistic. Worst case: several CONUS-capable SSBNs by 1978.

Qualitative Aspects

- (a) A nuclear counterforce capability is out of the question for a while. Anything beyond a counter-value deterrent capability vis-a-vis the U.S. and USSR is not possible in the 1970's.
- (b) Everything they have is liquid-propellant. Solid-fuel tests are expected to start at any time.
- (c) In general, the PRC's strategic programs, which were interrupted during the Lin Piao episode and subsequent leadership adjustments, can now be expected to move ahead, albeit with greater regard for their impact on balanced economic growth than was the case in the 1950's and 1960's.

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